

# Downtown

## Everybody's Neighborhood

An Update from Columbus Mayor Michael B. Coleman



### Downtown Plan Unveiled at Town Meeting

On April 17, Mayor Coleman and local community and business leaders came together at a town meeting to unveil the Downtown Business Plan before a full house of 700 people at the Southern Theatre. Mayor Coleman and Hamilton, Rabinovitz and Alschuler's John Alschuler, the plan's lead consultants, outlined the action strategies that will be implemented over the next 10 years to revitalize Downtown in time for the city's bicentennial.



Mayor Coleman with Larry Ruben and his father, Bernard, at Plaza Properties' groundbreaking for The Renaissance, apartments to be built at Mound and Third Streets. There will be 60 market rate apartments constructed on the .9 acre site with 19 garage spaces and 40 carports.

In addition to defining goals and standards for future development, the plan puts forward financial incentives and strategies to catalyze housing development and job creation.

In January 2001, the City of Columbus began the process of developing a business plan for Downtown. The plan represents a community consensus, which grew from interviews with business leaders, public officials, community leaders and more that 1,000 ideas from residents on how Downtown Columbus should look in the future.

The following five action strategies guiding the plan will help achieve the overarching goal of reviving Downtown Columbus. They are:

- Build more Downtown housing
- Stabilize the Downtown office market
- Concentrate new mixed-use development beginning around City Center and along Gay Street – support City Center Mall
- Create a riverfront park and promenade – a Downtown park system
- Improve parking and the movement of cars, transit and people



Plaza Properties' The Renaissance will help meet Mayor Coleman's goal of 10,000 units of housing Downtown over the next 10 years. Other projects expected to be complete over the next year include: JDS Enterprises' residential development at 429 East Main Street, Berardi Architect's Gardens at Grant, Casto Communities' High Street apartments, and Continental's residential development in the Arena District – totaling up to 850 units.

#### Action Strategy #1

##### Develop 10,000 units of Downtown housing in 10 years

The City of Columbus will offer financial incentives to spur Downtown housing and achieve this goal by the city's bicentennial. These incentives include:

- Increase real estate tax abatements
- Create a Downtown Housing Equity and Investment Fund – gap financing for Downtown housing projects
- Decrease upfront development costs such as street/sidewalk improvements and utility connection fees
- Make Downtown more attractive by creating more greenspace, improving retail and making sidewalks more pedestrian friendly



Casto Communities' High Street Apartments project was announced at the rollout of the Downtown Business Plan. The project is slated to break ground later this year at High and Main Streets.

#### Action Strategy #2

##### Reduce office vacancy rates so they equal national averages in 10 years

This action strategy will be accomplished through a variety of tactics that include:

- Increase job tax incentives
- Supply new, lower-cost parking
- Create Downtown amenities for workers, specifically more parks, increased parking, and walk-to-work housing

#### Action Strategy #3

##### Establish mixed-use neighborhoods near City Center, support Center Mall and revitalize Gay Street

This action strategy will help revitalize City Center and create more vibrancy along High Street.

- Develop the RiverSouth neighborhood, located between City Center and the county office complex
- Reinvigorate the Gay Street corridor from the river to the east by encouraging the renovation of existing buildings with retail and restaurants at the street level and housing on the floors above

#### Action Strategy #4

##### Create a downtown park system including a riverfront park and promenade

Downtown needs an integrated park system that improves existing parks and increases the amount of greenspace Downtown. To accomplish this the city will:

- Create a riverfront promenade along the eastern edge of the river
- Update Battelle and Bicentennial Parks and connect them with the new promenade and park
- Build a lower level park between the Broad and Town Street bridges that would include a dramatic water curtain anchored by native trees, wetland grasses and wildflowers

#### Action Strategy #5

##### Improve Downtown traffic and transit to create a better street ambiance and pedestrian experience by the following strategies:

- Make traffic improvements such as reduced speeds and improved flow by restoring two-way traffic on many one-way streets
- Construct additional municipal parking garages under the leadership of Capitol South
- Support public transit improvements to improve how people move into and around Downtown such as smaller bus circulators and Downtown light rail

The Downtown Business Plan will be implemented by the newly-created Columbus Downtown Development Corporation; and is supported by a \$100 million capital commitment from the city over the next 10 years. When supplemented by private sector investment and other government funds, the total investment in Downtown should exceed \$250 million.

The complete executive summary of the plan can be found online at <http://downtownplan.columbus.gov>. You can request copies by calling 645-3942.

### Tell Us Your Great Idea – for Downtown Bridges

Over the next six years, the City of Columbus Public Service Department will rebuild the Main and Town Street bridges.

Before demolition begins, the city is seeking your opinions on the three designs proposed for each. The proposed designs can be seen at <http://downtownplan.columbus.gov>, click on the bridge design link.

Call us before July 15 at 645-5465 with your opinions on the suggested designs.

### Speakers' Bureau Spreads the Word

To help educate the community about the city's Downtown Business Plan, a speakers' bureau has been established. The Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce's Downtown Council members are some of the volunteer speakers. Community groups, civic associations, corporations and others interested in learning about efforts to revitalize Downtown are encouraged to schedule a speaker. Presentations can be a brown-bag lunch, after work or as part of your group's regular meeting.



We ask the group be at least 10 people in size. There is no charge for the presentation. Call 645-3942 to schedule your speaker.





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# Downtown



## New Resource Center, Located on Capital Square, Offers One-Stop Assistance



With the completion of the Downtown Business Plan, the focus turns to implementation. Mayor Coleman has set the city's bicentennial in 2012 as the target date for completion. To help meet that goal the city

has created a one-stop center to promote Downtown development and revitalization – the Downtown Development Resource Center. Located on Capitol Square at 20 East Broad Street, this new Center has the people and agencies needed for projects in one centralized location.

The city has relocated its Downtown Development Office, that oversees Downtown projects, to the Center. Other tenants include:

- City of Columbus' Downtown Commission staff members, the Commission reviews and approves downtown projects
- Columbus Downtown Development Corporation, the newly-announced group of senior business leaders that will implement the Downtown Business Plan

- Capitol South Community Urban Redevelopment Corporation, a private, non-profit corporation overseeing development and redevelopment projects downtown, including City Center and its garages
- Capital Crossroads Special Improvement District (SID), a management district funded by property assessments that provides clean up services, safety patrols, coordinated marketing and promotion efforts, in a 25 square block area centered along High Street in Downtown's core

As implementation of the Downtown Business Plan begins, centralized staff and resources are one less obstacle for developers in our central business district. For details contact Downtown Development Director Bob McLaughlin at 645-6291.

## New Economic Development Corporation Adds Board Members, Launches Executive Director Search

The newly-created, non-profit economic development corporation – the Columbus Downtown Development Corporation – that will guide implementation of the Downtown Business Plan recently held its first meeting and began its search for a full-time executive director.

The Mayor named AEP Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer Dr. E. Linn Draper the chair of the new corporation.

"We are very fortunate to have a person of Dr. Draper's stature to lead Downtown's revitalization efforts. He is a visionary who has built AEP into one of the nation's largest energy providers. I want to thank him for his willingness to lead efforts to restore vitality to Downtown. We will spark a renewal that will bring many dividends to our community," said Mayor Coleman. "The Downtown Plan is not a short-term initiative, it is heavy lifting and requires leadership – we have that in Dr. Draper."

In accepting the new assignment, Draper commended Mayor Coleman for his business-like approach to studying and addressing Downtown's challenges. "The ability to examine a comprehensive array of elements from housing, to culture, to traffic and riverfront development is very exciting," Draper said. "Downtown has a vibrancy and rich history that tells me we have a tremendous opportunity to make an impact."

The Columbus Downtown Development Corporation is a private, non-profit 501(c)(3) economic development corporation with a

singular focus and specific charge. The Development Corporation will help the city achieve its goals by working on specific projects and bringing together the resources necessary to spark downtown development. To date, the CDDC has raised approximately \$950,000 for operating expenses.

Additional board members include:

- Thomas Hoaglin, CEO, Huntington Bancshares Inc.
- W.G. Jurgensen, CEO, Nationwide Insurance
- Dr. Brit Kirwan, President, The Ohio State University
- Carl F. Kohrt, President and CEO, Battelle
- Douglas F. Kridler, President and CEO, The Columbus Foundation
- Dr. Valeriana Moeller, President and CEO, Columbus State Community College

- Marnette Perry, President, Kroger, Columbus Market
- Ronald Pizzuti, Chairman and CEO, Pizzuti Inc.
- Jay Schottenstein, Chairman, Schottenstein Stores Corp.
- Alex Shumate, Managing Partner, Squire, Sanders & Dempsey L.L.P.
- Lewis R. Smoot, Sr., CEO, Smoot Construction Co.
- Leslie H. Wexner, Chairman and Founder, Limited Brands, Inc.
- John F. Wolfe, Chairman and CEO, Dispatch Printing Co.

The Mayor appoints the members with the counsel of Dr. Draper and City Council President Matt Habash with confirmation by city council. Franklin County will also appoint a board member.



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The Development Corporation will work with the city to develop a downtown park system including a new riverfront park.